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**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

For ensuring that a vending machine motor will continue to operate until a product has descended through a vending space or an established time interval has elapsed, an optical beam is established across the vend space through which a product must drop. A change in beam intensity is detected. By preference infra red light is emitted at one focal point of an elliptical reflector, and detected at the other focal point. The light is emitted in pulses in the preferred embodiment, and the optical sensing system has automated calibration and error detecting functions.

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